

A room with a view

By DAWN KLINGENSMITH
CTW Features

For years, the trend in outdoor living has been to integrate the interior with the exterior to get the best of both worlds. This means bringing comfy furniture and high-performance appliances outside, and developing materials and technologies to help them withstand the weather.

The recession may have dampened spending overall, but it drives the "inside-out" movement as people forgo vacations and nights on the town to make the most of their outdoor living space. Homeowners want to step into their backyards without leaving the comforts of home. That means bringing indoor practicalities like task lighting and coat racks into the outdoors. And then there are those who want to feel as though they're worlds away.

"The style in outdoor living this year can be summed up in two words: luxury resort," says Elaine Williamson, owner of her self-named Frisco, Texas-based design firm. Her clients want amenities like decked-out cabanas that give the impression that an umbrella drink is soon to come. "We're truly turning yards into places you'd visit on vacation."

Both groups, the nesters and escapers, are fueling a "design revolution" in outdoor furniture and furnishings, says Rob Pressman, principal of TGP Inc. Landscape Architecture, Encino, Calif. "Exteriors used to be more raw in the sense we didn't have all these sophisticated materials. Now, all the interior elements are available for the

outdoors."

Manufacturers are offering outdoor furnishings that would look right at home in a living room or even a four-star hotel suite, including deep, comfy sofas with silky upholstery, accent pillows with elegant piping, and fringed throws. "Think tufted, rounded and luxurious, with not a bit of wrought iron," Williamson says. "Think damask. Nautical stripes and big tropical florals on vinyl are a thing of the past."

Companies like Patio Heaven and Kanna offer outdoor sectionals, sofas, loveseats and ottomans that seem like they would be out of their element outdoors. **Continued on Page 9**

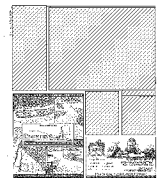
side, due to the richness of their materials and their detailed construction, but they're designed to withstand full exposure to wind, rain and sun.

"You can leave them unprotected. You can spray them off with a hose," Williamson says. "Some manufacturers are so bold as to offer them in white."

White is "popping up everywhere," agrees Gina Wicker, creative and design director for Glen Raven, N.C.-based fabric design firm Glen Raven Inc., which makes Sunbrella outdoor and indoor fabrics. "It makes the perfect canvas for seasonal updates with pillows, throws and rugs." This season, "Neutrals are transitioning to cooler hues like a gray-cast taupe rather than warmer tones, and charcoal gray rather than dark, chocolate brown," Wicker adds. "We're seeing these cooler neutrals partnering with anything from fun yellow, orange and pink to calmer wheat, brass or vellum hues."

Whatever the purpose of an inside-out exterior, the same interior design principles should guide the selection and placement of furnishings. "They might apply even more so," Williamson says, "because there are more interferences by which you need to scale things and consider the colors." Start by finding or creating a focal point, such as a cabana, fireplace or water feature, she suggests. This visual anchor, along with natural landscape features and the home's architecture, will help determine the color palette, materials and lighting that will be used throughout the outdoor living space.

Balance, repetition, contrast and variety are important design principles



to take into consideration. Contrast and texture can be introduced underfoot, as flooring for the outdoors has come a long way. "It's a lot richer - not just your brick patio," Pressman says. "You have woods, tiles, stones. You can use just about anything you'd use indoors as long as it's slip-resistant."

Wood decking, fencing, structures and furnishings can enliven and add dimension to a space with deep, vibrant colors that go far beyond the basic browns, like Olympic Exterior Stains' Harvest Gold, Avocado and a lipstick-like shade called Rosewood.

When applying design principles to wide-open spaces, the areas where people tend to fall down are scale and proportion. Where intimacy is desired, a pergola "scales everything down to create the feeling of an outdoor room," says Jeff Hutton, author of "Inside Out: The Art and Craft of Home Landscaping" (Breakaway Books, 2007).

Finishing touches also have an indoor sensibility. "I have seen more and more interest in outdoor sculpture and art used in the landscape," Hutton says. Though perhaps not on the same level as Rembrandt, specially treated oil paintings resistant to sun, rain and snow are cropping up on fences and above outdoor sofas. CB2 offers versatile furnishings conveniently designed for outdoor and indoor use, including the Garcon Rolling Bar Cart that collapses for storage.

"People want flexibility," Pressman says. "Things used to be more defined, and spaces were zoned according to use, so you'd have your grill in one place like a little outdoor kitchen. But as families and kids grow, people like to be able to do different things and move things around." Williamson also

has noticed a preference for what she calls "free-range fires." She especially likes the portable line of chic fire vessels by Planika Fires, which are safe for small or enclosed spaces because they burn smokeless, nontoxic bio-fuels.

With all the furnishings available for outside, it's important not to lose sight of two things: Plantings still make the best backyard decorations, and less is more, even outdoors.

"Each defined space should have one idea or make one statement," Pressman says. "It shouldn't try to do too many things functionally or aesthetically."

Outdoor fabrics update

These aren't your grandma's outdoor fabrics. Today's newest exterior fibers still have the strength to withstand extreme weather conditions, but with the added comfort and style worthy of a living room.

"Today's outdoor fabrics have the beautiful patterns and soft hand that would be expected of indoor fabrics," says Patti Frye, fabric manager at Conover, N.C.-based Laneventure.

Gone are the days of mismatched patio furniture. Homeowners want a unified look. "Creating a cohesive look from the interior spaces through to the outdoor room is huge right now," says Gina Wicker, creative and design director for Glen Raven, N.C.-based fabric design firm Glen Raven Inc., which makes Sunbrella outdoor and indoor fabrics. "Fabrics originally developed for outdoor use have evolved into high-performance fabrics for use inside or out."

Continued on Page 10

What's Hot

Textured, solid-colored fabrics are a major trend for 2010. Solid-color accent pieces are relatively inexpensive and easy to change. "Buying new toss pillows can give the outdoor room an entirely new look without being overt," Frye says. The hottest colors are earthy browns and greens, like palm and basil, and warm reds and oranges, like henna and ruby tones, she says. Both experts agree that grays are taking over as the neutral color of choice.

But beware of going too cool. "The key when working with cooler colors, especially gray, is to accent it with warmer hues to keep the look from being too cold," Wicker says.

As for patterns, expect to see swirl designs and a finer line on stripes, says Randy Renyer, co-owner of Outdoor Rooms by Design, Kimberling City, Mo. Wicker says contemporary geometrics are also in.

What's Not

Across the board, all experts agree that traditional floral patterns are well past their prime. "Realistic floral and leaf patterns and traditional tropicals feel dated," Wicker says. Keep realistic florals in the garden and opt for more stylized floral patterns on furniture, she says. Frye says to nix all fussy, ornate patterns and large scale stripes. And a solid without texture? No way, she says. "Fabrics that are visually uninteresting, not soft to the touch and that don't express a homeowner's personality are out."

As are fabrics that can't hold up over time. "Look for 100 percent solution-dyed acrylics or acrylic blends," Frye says. Renyer agrees, offering a helpful hint for homeowners to identify a quality pattern. "Flip a cushion over," he suggests. "If the print comes all the way through to the back side, that fabric will last longer and be more resistant."

Remember: With outdoor fabrics, quality and style are no longer mutually exclusive. As Frye says, "Design is no longer an afterthought — it's a must."

— Danielle Robinson

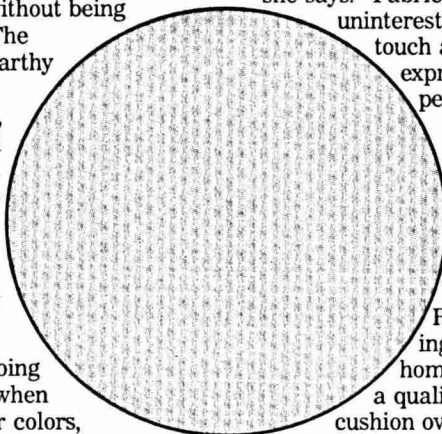
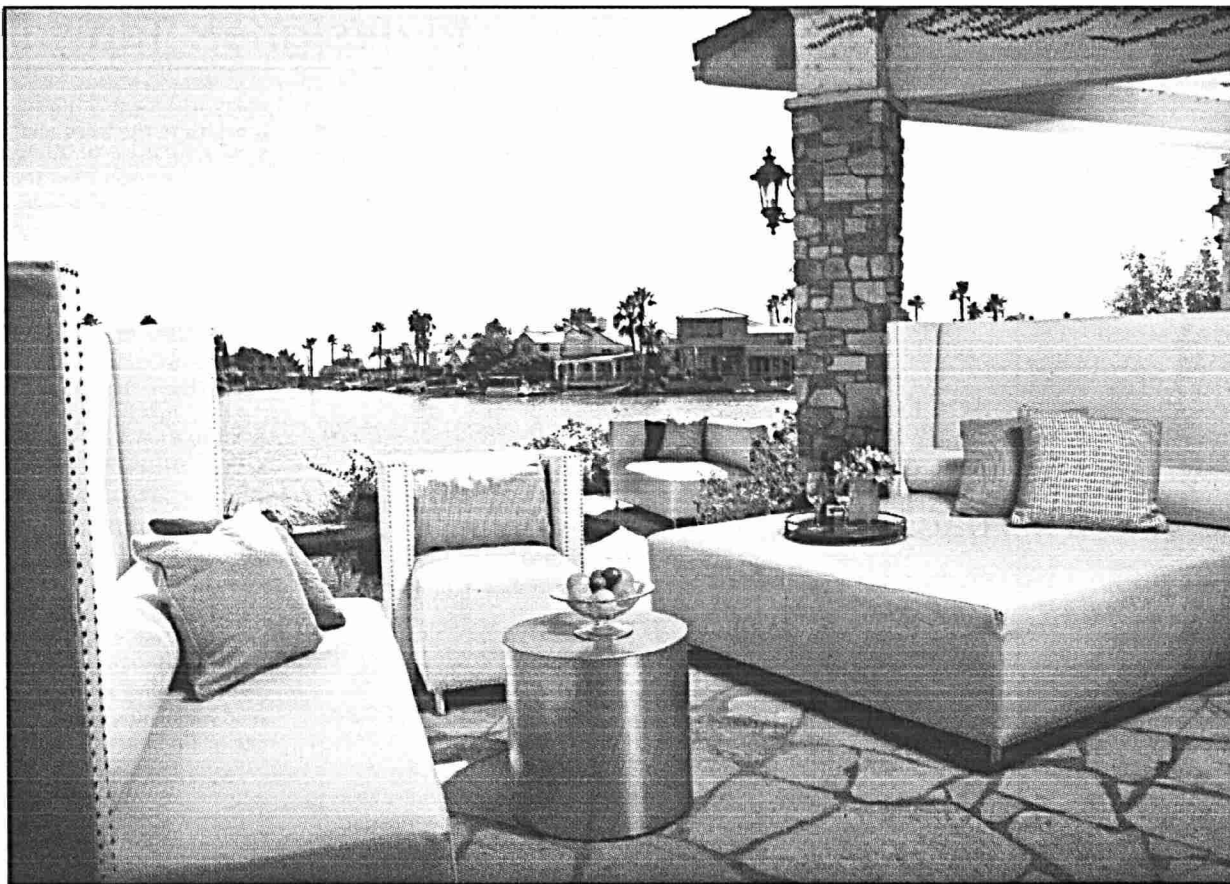




Image courtesy of Martha Stewart Living and The Home Depot

Inside out: Embroidery, tufts and piping are finding new places to shine in the backyard.



Courtesy of SomersFurniture.com c/o ElaineWilliamsonDesigns.com

Inside out: Cushion and fabric details that have come to be expected in family rooms are making their way outside.

Page 4 of 4